

Dear Senator Winfield, Rep. Stafstrom, Ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Hamden, CT and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence.

Just two nights ago, a friend called me to say that he was depressed and didn't want to talk to his wife about it. When asked what was bothering him, he said "suicide". At first I thought he meant he was contemplating it because he was depressed - but I know him better than that. I asked a few more questions to find out that two young boys, ages 13 and 14, had committed suicide within the past 2 months, both from self-inflicted gun shots. Can you imagine? These 2 boys had access to firearms that made their decision to take their own lives that much easier. These were just kids, boys, with their entire lives ahead of them. Guns kill.

CT was the first state in the nation to pass the Extreme Risk Protection Order law in 1999. It offers as a means of last resort, with due process, to temporarily remove firearms from those deemed at risk to themselves or at risk to others. We know it prevents firearm suicide and prevents mass killings. It is now time to strengthen this law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. Specifically, it should be expanded to ensure that when the protection order expires, it should be required that the subject is no longer at risk before the firearms are returned. This is not part of the current law.

Risk protection laws have been proven to reduce firearm suicide. A Duke/Yale/UCONN study reported that for every 10-20 risk protection orders issued under Connecticut's ERPO law, one suicide is prevented. Indiana, its extreme risk law reduced suicide by firearms by 75%.

I ask that you favorably report HB6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection Order law in an effort to prevent firearms suicide and homicide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alison Cunningham
Hamden, CT
Sent from my iPad